



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate

Contact: Claudia Rumfelt-Wright 919 715 8497
Johanna Reese 919 715 7357

Date: , 2004

NEW LOOK TO RESTAURANT SANITATION SCORE CARDS TO BEGIN IN AUGUST

RALEIGH- The restaurant inspection process is the same, but the sanitation score 'grade cards' posted after the inspection will have a different look. State environmental health officials are rolling out the new score cards, which will be used in restaurant inspections beginning August 1.

The new card will prominently feature both the letter grade (A, B or C) and the number score (70-102), in 1 ½-inch characters. Both scores were previously on the cards, but the number score was written in at the bottom of the grade card and difficult to see. The cards will also be black and white; the old cards had different colors for the different letter grades.

"The new cards make more information available to restaurant patrons—enlarging the numbers means they can see where the restaurant falls on the 100-point scale as well as the letter grade," said Sue Grayson, head of the Food and Dairy Protection Branch within the Division of Environmental Health.

The restaurant inspection process is unchanged. Restaurants and other food handling establishments are still subject to quarterly unannounced inspections by environmental health specialists from local health departments. Inspectors observe the premises and the conditions under which food is handled and prepared. Deductions from the scores are made when the rules are not met and the results of these inspections, in the form of the sanitation score card, are required to be posted in a place easily seen by the public. The changes in the sanitation score card format make it easier for customers to note the number score and use it when making dining choices.

The change comes after a pilot study in seven counties tested a grade card that contained only a number score, without the letter grade. Based upon the pilot counties' experiences and feedback from health departments, industry and the public, the state decided to use a card with prominent letter and number scores. Use of the new cards will begin on August 1.

State environmental health officials want North Carolinians to 'Know the Score' and have launched a public outreach campaign aimed at making restaurant patrons aware of the new card format. The state will distribute 'Know the Score' fact sheets and brochures about the new card to local health departments. This information is also available by contacting the state Division of Environmental Health at 919 715 8497 or by visiting the division web site at www.deh.enr.state.nc.us.

###